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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 01/26/07

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Articles:

1) US vice president to visit Japan on Feb. 21

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
January 26, 2007

United States Vice President Dick Cheney will visit Japan for three days starting Feb. 21, according to sources connected to Japan-US relations yesterday. While in Japan, Cheney will meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and other senior Japanese officials to exchange views on the new US Iraq policy announced by President Bush, North Korea's nuclear development issue, and other matters.

2) Defense Minister Kyuma expresses apology for criticism of US

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) Full)
January 26, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe revealed last evening that Defense

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Minister Fumio Kyuma yesterday offered him an apology for having criticized US President Bush's decision on the launch of the Iraq war at the plenary session of the House of Representatives. Kyuma reportedly told Abe that his remarks were not intended to oppose the cabinet decision to support the Iraqi war. He told Abe: "I expressed the view that I had held before the Iraq war started." Abe was replying to questions by reporters at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. He told the reporters: "I think there is no problem with his remarks."

3) Kyuma remains critical of Iraq war; Gov't fears impact on Japan-US relations

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
January 26, 2007

Defense Minister Kyuma has been reiterating his criticism of the US government over the Iraq war. Kyuma has voiced his strong doubt about the Iraq war from the start. However, he has made such critical remarks since assuming his cabinet post. Officials in the government are therefore concerned about a negative impact on Japan-US relations.

"President Bush launched the war in a situation as if there were nuclear weapons (in Iraq), but I think that decision was wrong," Kyuma said in his speech delivered on Jan. 24. With this, he criticized Bush's decision to start the war.

"The government has released a statement (in support of the United States), so I support it," Kyuma explained in a press conference yesterday. However, he also insisted, "In those days, I felt like saying, 'Wait.'"

In December last year, when Kyuma was seated in on the House of Councillors Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee as Defense Agency director general, he stated before the committee, "The government did not officially say Japan would support (the Iraq war)." The following day, Kyuma retracted his statement, saying, "I was wrong, I didn't know that."

Yukio Hatoyama, secretary general of the leading opposition

Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), said: "Mr. Kyuma is right. The government is wrong." However, now that the Bush administration is a fix due to its Iraq policy, government leaders are beginning to criticize Kyuma for his remarks over the Iraq war, with a senior official of the Cabinet Secretariat asserting, "We should support (the Bush administration) as an ally-it's now or never."

Prime Minister Abe, however, revealed yesterday evening that he had an explanation from Kyuma. "I heard he had introduced his views before the Iraq war, so I think there's no problem," Abe told reporters, indicating that he would accept Kyuma's explanation.

4) Defense Minister Kyuma readily corrects controversial remarks

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
January 26, 2007

Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma has continued to make statements that differ with the government's policy on the Iraq war and on the realignment of US forces in Japan. He, then has casually corrected his previous remarks. The dominant view is that he has made such

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controversial remarks to find the middle ground, and that they are not his views.

At his press conference on Jan. 24, Kyuma criticized US President Bush for "having made a wrong decision" in launching the Iraq war. Referring to the remarks on the previous day at his press conference yesterday, however, he explained, "Whenever the decision was right or wrong, the government's position of supporting the US remains unchanged. As long as the government has made that decision, I will follow it.

Kyuma also made a statement last December: "The Japanese government has not officially announced its support for the (Iraq war)." He took back his remarks next day. His criticism of the Iraq war sounds like criticism of the governments of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Moreover, in connection with the issue of relocating the US Marine Corps' Air Station Futenma, he expressed on Jan. 3 his view of not sticking to the V-shaped airstrips plan, as agreed between the governments of Japan and the United States. His remarks shocked the Prime Minister's Official Residence. On Jan. 14, however, he said that we would postpone discussion on revising the plan for two or three years.

Since Kyuma quipped to his aides, "I am carefully watching the ripples from my remarks," the dominant view in the LDP is that he made calculated remarks, with one senior member saying, "He is a person who is good at coordination."

However, if a cabinet minister continues to make remarks that are different from the government's policy, the opposition will inevitably attack the government and ruling party in the Diet. Some in the ruling coalition are concerned about negative impact on deliberations in the ongoing Diet session.

5) Kyuma claims he has no relations with political organization reported by weekly magazine

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
January 26, 2007

Commenting on a weekly magazine report that four political organizations related to him have no offices at their reported addresses, Defense Minister Kyuma during a press conference after a cabinet meeting yesterday said, "The Constitution and Politics Association is a political organization with which I have no relations at all. I am not a representative of the remaining three organizations but a recommendee. Representatives of those offices have presumably neglected to report the change of addresses." He thus stressed that he has nothing to do with the four political organizations.

6) Defense Minister Kyuma on report about mahjong parlor registered as his office: "I don't know anything about it"

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
January 26, 2007

Some weekly magazines reported that Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's political organization in which his former secretary serves as treasurer had registered a mahjong game parlor as its office. In a

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press conference yesterday, Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma said, "I don't know anything about it at all. I believe it has nothing to do with me." It also was reported that another political organization of his has its office in his private secretary's residence. On this report, Kyuma said, "That seems to be true. There should be no restrictions (about where the office is located). Such a case is quite common."

7) Resignation of Vice Chairman Tsunoda unavoidable

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
January 26, 2007

Over the allegation that the campaign office of House of Councillors Vice Chairman Giichi Tsunoda in the 2001 Upper House election did not list huge mid-campaign contributions in its political fund report, Tsunoda has been pressed to step down. He is expected to decide to resign as early as today. The ordinary Diet session started with disturbance yesterday, with a focus on the problem of politics and money.

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), to which Tsunoda belongs, held a standing executives' meeting and a joint plenary meeting of party members of both houses of the Diet in succession yesterday. Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama reported on the problem of Tsunoda.

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In both meetings, participants presented severe opinions about the problem, one member claiming: "(The current session) should be a golden opportunity for Minshuto, but since there is a scandal involving Vice Chairman Tsunoda, we find it difficult to grill (the ruling camp over the series of office expense scandals involving cabinet members."

Minshuto Upper House Chairman Azuma Koshiishi met with Tsunoda at noon yesterday in the Diet building and conveyed the atmosphere in the party. Tsunoda reportedly just replied, "I will take it seriously."

In the party, there are few willing to allow Tsunoda to stay on. The dominant view is that he would have no choice but to decide to resign.

Over the scandal, Tsunoda explained in a press conference and on other occasions that his fund management organization or support groups had received no mid-campaign contributions. Asked about the allegation that he had accepted contributions from a foreigners' group, an act banned under the Political Funds Control Law, he said, "The then treasurer has said, 'there was no exchange of money,' so I believe it."

8) Regular Diet session starts: Prime Minister hopes to focus on educational revitalization but "politics and money" issue will likely become source of contention for ruling and opposition camps

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
January 26, 2007

The 166th regular session of the Diet started yesterday. Political parties are expected to clash fiercely until June 23, when the Diet adjourns, followed by the Upper House election. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), like the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), will have to deal with its own "politics and money" problem, which likely will weaken its attack against the other party.

Prime Minister Abe during a plenary meeting of the LDP lawmakers in both Diet chambers held yesterday afternoon in the Diet building stated, "We will submit key bills during this Diet session that are intended to build a beautiful country. I want to see discussions with the DPJ pursued in a dignified manner." He later expressed his resolve to reporters, "I want to make this Diet session an education revitalization Diet."

Facing falling approval ratings for his cabinet, the prime minister wants to build up a good track record on the policy front. Former LDP secretary general Makoto Koga, chairman of the Niwa-Koga faction, noted, "We want the prime minister to leave his policy imprint without becoming overly sensitive to approval ratings for his cabinet." The party is taking a stance of supporting the prime minister, with the upcoming Upper House election in mind.

LDP concerned about possible change in political trend

The prime minister is concerned about the possible impact of the resignation of Lower House member Genichiro Sata as state minister for administrative reform in disgrace over the shady handling of his ledgers, and the issue of Agriculture Minister Matsuoka's having reported a large amount of money as office expenses. He stressed to reporters yesterday, "The party is now discussing the office expense issue." However, some participants in a plenary session of the Tsushima faction yesterday expressed concern, as Yuji Tsushima,

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chairman of the LDP Tax System Research Commission, noted, "I vaguely sense that the political trend might change or some changes might occur."

DPJ head Ozawa during a plenary session of DPJ lawmakers in both chambers of the Diet yesterday showed enthusiasm, noting, "We will bring up problems about the way the LDP and the New Komeito are administering politics, calling this Diet session a social-disparity correction Diet." The DPJ's strategy is to gain momentum for the Upper House election, by cornering the Abe administration in cooperation with other opposition parties over the country's income gap, and "politics and money" issue.

However, regarding the "politics and money" issue, the issue of political funds donation involving Upper House Vice President Giichi Tsunoda and the issue of Ozawa's political funds management

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organization having reported expenses for the construction of his secretary's house as office expenses have surfaced. Ozawa during an

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executive meeting yesterday said, "I want to state my view on this issue in a Lower House representative question session on Jan. 29. Some DPJ members are concerned that the issue could weaken our party's pursuit of the government."

9) Office expense issue: Ibuki, Matsuoka deny any irregularities

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
January 26, 2007

The fund management organizations of Education and Science Minister Ibuki and Agriculture Minister Matsuoka have allegedly reported a large amount of money as office expenses. Both yesterday attended a plenary meeting of the Ibuki faction of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and insisted that there were no irregularities in their payment balance reports. With a similar issue involving Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) head Ozawa in mind, Ibuki indicated

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a bullish stance: "We must also have the DPJ head discuss whether his office expenses are large or small. I want to have a question session in the Diet at an early date. I will reply to questions

properly there."

10) New Komeito also debating within the party policy making political funds more transparent

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpt)
January 26, 2007

The New Komeito at a central committee meeting on Jan. 25 decided to launch its own discussion within the party about a policy that would make political funding more transparent. With the cabinet and other ruling party officials being showered with criticism for their handling of office expenses, the party aims to tackle the "politics and money" issue in tandem with the Liberal Democratic Party, its coalition partner, launching a study on the propriety of restricting the possession of real-estate holdings by political fund management organs.

11) Twenty-seven Lower and Upper House members' operating expenses, which do not require receipts, top 50% of total expenses, according to Yomiuri Shimbun survey

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
January 26, 2007

A Yomiuri Shimbun survey has discovered that of the lawmakers who reported more than 50 million yen in total expenditures in political funds payment balance reports submitted by their fund management organizations, the number of those whose operating expenses, such as office expenses, which do not require receipts, exceeded more than half the total expenditures reached 27. The survey brought out into the open a situation that is far from the principles of the Political Fund Control Law. Since the "politics and money" issue is a key issue in the regular session of the Diet, which started yesterday, the finding will likely give rise to fierce debate.

Of 721 members of both Diet chambers as of the end of March, 2006, Yomiuri Shimbun conducted a survey on 650 lawmakers who have fund management organizations registered with the boards of elections of the state or prefectures and submitted payments balance reports for fiscal 2005. The survey only targeted lawmakers whose total expenses topped 50 million yen largely exceeding the average expenses of lawmakers, because if total expenses are small, operating expenses, which include necessary expenditures, such as office expenses, tend to be high.

Of the surveyed lawmakers, 81 lawmakers' total expenses topped 50 million yen, of whom operating expenses 24 Lower House members and three Upper House members topped 50% of total expenses. The breakdown comes down to 22 Liberal Democratic Party members, three Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) members, one People's New Party (PNP, Kokumin Shinto) member and one non-affiliated member. The ratio of operating expenses reported by Jun Matsumoto, Yasuhiro Hanashi, Hajime Yosano and Taku Eto topped 70%.

12) Prime Minister gives Diet policy speech today; Representative interpellations begin early next week

TOKYO (Page 2) (Full)

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January 26, 2007

The Diet steering committees of the lower and upper houses held their respective directors' meetings yesterday afternoon, and this afternoon, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will address both chambers of the Diet with his policy speech, one of four government speeches to be given today. The schedule for next week starts on the 29th and 30th with each party carrying out interpellations in the Lower House. The interpellations will shift to the Upper House on the 30th and 31st. The questions will be asked by Liberal Democratic Party Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa, and New Komeito Representative Akihiro Ota.

13) "Dai Kochikai" concept runs aground, due to rivalry among Aso,

Tanigaki, Koga

SANKEI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
January 26, 2007

The "Dai (grand) Kochikai" concept to merge the Koga, Tanigaki, and Aso factions, all of which come from the Liberal Democratic Party's "Kochikai" established by former Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda, has reached a gridlock. Former Secretary General Makoto Koga and former Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki indicated their support for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday. By demonstrating support for Abe, they seem to be aiming to hold in check moves by Foreign Minister Taro Aso, who has close ties with Abe and has been calling on the Koga and Tanigaki factions to join his party as the head of the "leadership faction." Seeing the three having a strong rivalry, a faction member was overheard grumbling in a quandary, "Where did the idea of the integration concept go to?"

In a general meeting of the Tanigaki faction yesterday, Tanigaki expressed his support for Prime Minister Abe, remarking:

"To support the administration, I will try to find a way to solicit a wide array of public opinions and work hard. This must follow the traditions of Kochikai."

Many faction members had anticipated that Tanigaki might express his determination in the meeting to aim at becoming the successor of Abe, who is losing momentum.

Koga also implied his support for Abe, saying in a meeting of his faction yesterday:

"The people hope for the stability of the government led by Prime Minister Abe. We will offer cooperation as like-minded lawmakers so that the prime minister will be able to fully demonstrate his leadership."

14) Problems with ruling coalition's cooperation in Upper House, as some in LDP reluctant to support New Komeito in proportional representation

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
January 26, 2007

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner New Komeito next month will launch full-scale consultations of their senior and working-level officials on cooperation for the House of

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Councillors election in the summer. Given that the New Komeito, which places priority on winning proportional representation seats, is hoping to keep the eight seats it has now, it intends to ask the LDP to back its candidates for the proportional representation segment in place of its backing of LDP candidates in the electoral districts. A senior LDP member, however, commented: "Since we will face a political battle with Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), we can't afford to give votes to the New Komeito." Some LDP members have instead begun calling for conducting the Upper and Lower Houses elections the same day, which the New Komeito doesn't want to see. As it stands, there are warning signals on election cooperation between the LDP and New Komeito.

"We will do our best to win eight seats. We will firmly keep the eight seats we have now," New Komeito Chief Representative Akihiro Ota said in a meeting yesterday of the party members from both houses of the Diet. The New Komeito has fielded seven incumbent Upper House members as candidates and one newcomer in eight proportional representation blocs. The party will prepare itself to obtain at least seven seats. Therefore, the key is whether the party's Upper House Chairman Shozo Kusakawa, the eighth candidate, will win a seat.

The New Komeito, which has the firm support base backed by the religious sect Soka Gakkai, won 8.18 million votes in the 2001 Upper House election and its largest ever 8.62 million votes in the 2004 Upper House race. In the 2004 election, many party members

complained that the party was unable to get election support from the LDP as it had expected. So, the dominant view in the party is that the New Komeito must consider ways to sell its votes for as much as possible to the LDP.

Ota has analyzed along with LDP Upper House Chairman Mikio Aoki the outcomes of the Upper House elections since before he assumed his post. At the request of the New Komeito, the ruling camp set up on Jan. 17 the Ruling Coalition Upper House Election Council, which will be run by LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa and New Komeito Secretary General Kazuo Kitagawa. In an attempt to add LDP votes to its votes, the New Komeito has continued applying pressure on the LDP.

However, nothing has yet to turn out as the New Komeito planned. The view is growing in the LDP that if the party excessively relies on the New Komeito, its organization itself will weaken. A senior LDP Upper House member is strongly seeking to check the New Komeito, saying, "Elections in the proportional representation segment are battles between parties."

15) Poll: 46% appreciate Defense Agency's upgrade to ministry

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
January 26, 2007

The Yomiuri Shimbun conducted a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey on Jan. 20-21 to probe public attitudes toward the Defense Ministry's current status recently upgraded from an agency. In the survey, respondents were asked if they would appreciate the Defense Agency's upgrade to full ministry status. In response to this question, 46% answered "yes," with 39% saying "no." As seen from these figures, affirmative opinions outnumbered negative one.

A similar question was asked in a previous survey conducted in

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September 1997 about the Defense Agency's upgrade to a ministry. In that survey, respondents were asked if they thought it would be desirable to upgrade the Defense Agency to a ministry. In response, "yes" accounted for 24%, and "no" at 52%. The survey this time indicates that the general public now has a better understanding of readiness for national security.

The Self-Defense Forces has been engaged in international peace cooperation activities as ancillary tasks. With the Defense Agency's upgrade to a ministry, however, the SDF is now tasked with such activities as its primary missions. Asked whether to appreciate this, "yes" accounted for 63%.

Questions & Answers
(Figures shown in percentage)

Q: The SDF has so far been tasked with national defense, disaster relief operations at home and abroad, and international peace cooperation activities overseas. Do you appreciate these SDF activities and roles on the whole?

Appreciate very much	33.7
Appreciate somewhat	48.5
Don't appreciate very much	11.1
Don't appreciate at all	3.8
No answer (N/A)	2.9

Q: The Defense Agency was upgraded to the status of a ministry on Jan. 9 this year. Do you appreciate this?

Appreciate very much	16.3
Appreciate somewhat	29.4
Don't appreciate very much	27.8
Don't appreciate at all	11.4
N/A	15.0

Q: In the past, the SDF was tasked with international peace cooperation activities and overseas emergency evacuation operations for Japanese nationals as its ancillary missions. Along with the

Defense Agency's recent upgrade to full ministry status, these SDF activities have now been elevated to primary missions for the SDF. Do you appreciate this?

Appreciate very much	25.4
Appreciate somewhat	37.2
Don't appreciate very much	21.1
Don't appreciate at all	7.2
N/A	9.0

Polling methodology

Date of survey: Jan. 20-21.

Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).

Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.

Number of valid respondents: 1,780 persons (59.3%).

16) Defense Ministry to launch communications system unit

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)

January 26, 2007

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The Defense Ministry has decided to establish a new integral body of the Self-Defense Forces in March 2008 as the first joint unit of the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces after their operational integration. The planned unit is called the "SDF Command and Communication System Division (CCSD)." The government will introduce relevant bills to the Diet in its current session to revise the Defense Ministry Establishment Law and the Self-Defense Forces Law. The planned legislation will allow the SDF to establish joint units as bodies under the defense minister's direct control and will also restructure the SDF in connection with the ministry's upgrade from its previous status of an agency to a ministry.

The CCSD will be made up of subdivisions, such as the "Central Command Operation Unit," which will manage and control communication systems at the Central Command as the Defense Ministry's operational headquarters, and the "Network Operation Unit," which will deal with cyberattacks. The CCSD will be staffed with about 160 personnel from the SDF's three branches and other organizations.

The GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF have their own communication systems. Their systems, however, are not compatible enough to communicate among themselves in an effective way. The Defense Ministry therefore decided to create a joint body in the area of information and telecommunications first. The SDF currently has organs common to its three branches, such as the SDF Central Hospital and the SDF Physical Training School. However, this is the first time for the SDF to have a joint unit for its operations. The Defense Ministry is also planning to establish joint units for medical and transport services.

17) Drunken American diplomat arrested for smashing door

YOMIURI (Page 34) (Full)

January 26, 2007

It has been learned that a male diplomat in his 20s posted to the American Embassy in Minato-ku, Tokyo, being drunk and having smashed the door of a private home, has been arrested by Azabu police on the scene of the crime for destruction of property. After the arrest, it turned out that he was a diplomat, so the police released him.

According to the Azabu police station, a little after 3:00 am on the 20th, the diplomat opened the gate to a private dwelling in Roppongi and entered the premises. He then hit the knob of the door with his bare hands repeatedly and smashed it. A policeman ran over, having been called by the family, and the diplomat was arrested.

At the time of arrest, the diplomat was dead drunk. According to the police investigation, the diplomat reportedly stated, "I was drunk and don't remember much, but I probably smashed the door myself."

